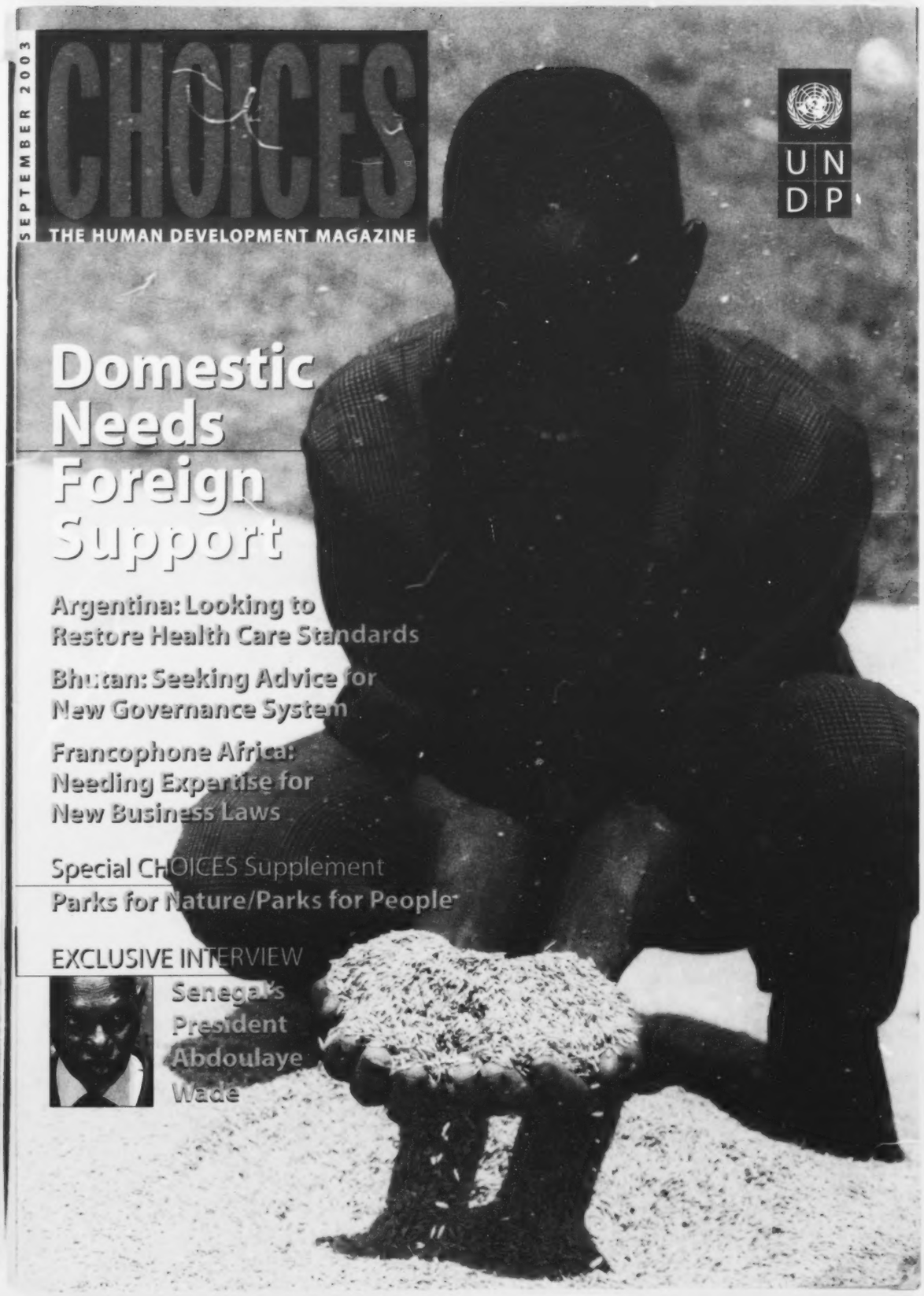

CHOICES
THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT MAGAZINE
SEPTEMBER 2003
UN
DP
Domestic Needs Foreign Support
Argentina: Looking to Restore Health Care Standards
Bhutan: Seeking Advice for New Governance System
Francophone Africa: Needing Expertise for New Business Laws
Special CHOICES Supplement
Parks for Nature/Parks for People
EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
Senegal's President Abdoulaye Wade

FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Leadership and Partnership

It was hard, after attending the African Union Summit in Maputo, to reconcile the unalloyed optimism of the resulting communiqués with the news from Africa, which included the same grim outlook that I had heard before the meeting, from the ongoing bloodshed in Liberia to the coup d'état, since reversed, in Sao Tome and Principe.

Yet optimism is one of Africa's most enduring resources, and it made me think about the song by the internationally known singer Baaba Maal, whose words here were directed toward the idea of Senegalese unity, and in a broader sense, African unity.

Dearest One
Be careful not to cross me
Peace is all I want
Don't ever take my love for granted
I would never give you my love and then withdraw it
If we break that trust our enemies will laugh at us
For me, all I want is peace

Photo: Sapo Nabe/UNDP

Djibril Diallo introduces UNDP's latest Youth Emissary, Senegalese singer Baaba Maal.

While perhaps less poetic, the endorsement of all the African leaders attending the Summit to fully commit to NEPAD, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, is full recognition of the need for solid leadership and partnership to achieve the goals of development.

The goals, in this case, are the Millennium Development Goals, unanimously agreed upon by all countries, that set targets for halving poverty by 2015, improving education, reducing disease and for taking other steps to improve people's lives. There is much that developing countries can do to meet these goals, but to do so, they must look beyond their borders for assistance.

Shortly before leaving for the African Union Summit in Maputo, I met with one of the main architects of NEPAD, Senegal's President Abdoulaye Wade (see p. 26). In his office in Dakar, President Wade told me that the best way to fight poverty is to create income generating activities. "I prefer," he says, "to give them aid in the form of seeds and fertilizer rather than to give them food."

Without international cooperation, it is unlikely that the Millennium Development Goals will be met. In this issue of CHOICES, we look at a variety of ways that international cooperation makes a difference, at the national level as well as at the personal level. At the global level, the world is holding a follow-up meeting on the Tokyo International Conference on African Development—TICAD III—so we visit Guinea to get a firsthand look at the success of the Asian-African cooperation that produced Nerica, a new strain of rice that is perfectly suited to Africa. Also at the global level is the World Parks Congress 2003 in Durban, South Africa, and to mark the event, we have a special supplement highlighting UNDP's efforts in Mexico and Sudan to promote parks and protected areas, not only to preserve the world's precious biodiversity, but also to allow people to earn sustainable livelihoods.

This issue also explores how international assistance is helping Argentina's public health care system; in Romania, where abandoned children are restoring faded landmarks; in Francophone Africa, where assistance is providing a solid legal foundation for commerce; in the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan, where international assistance is helping to shape a new system of governance; and in the United Arab Emirates, where foreign expertise is helping to break down barriers for women in the marketplace.

What we find, in each country visit, are not handouts from the international community, but rather, the seeds that are yielding results that will make everyone better off.

Djibril Diallo

Cover: A bountiful harvest for Kabinet Traoré, made possible by Nerica, a new rice variety for Africa, the result of Asian-African cooperation.
Photo: Sadio Barry/UNDP

CHOICES

Volume 12 Number 3
September 2003

Editor-in-Chief
Djibril Diallo

Editor
Daniel Shepard

Managing Editor
Rajeswary Iruthayanathan

Design
Ferro+Ferro Graphic Communication
Arlington, Virginia

Production Manager
Maureen Lynch

Editorial/Production Associate
Jennifer Prince

Distribution
Shamsuz Zaman

Special Adviser to the Editor-in-Chief
Nadine Gordimer

Advisers
Dianne Abbott
Sharon Capeling-Alakija
Mervin Aubeapin
Sandy Close
Inge Kaul
Geoffrey Lean

UNDP is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life.

CHOICES
is published four times a year by:
Communications Office
Office of the Administrator
United Nations Development Programme
One United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017, USA
Tel: (1-212) 906 5325
Fax: (1-212) 906 5364
E-mail: choices@undp.org

The articles in this magazine do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the United Nations Development Programme, nor do the boundaries and names shown on maps imply official endorsement by the United Nations. Articles may be freely reproduced as long as credit is given and tear sheets are provided to the editor. CHOICES is available in English, French and Spanish.

The printed matter is recyclable. Phonix-Trykkeriet A/S, Aarhus, Denmark. ISO 14001 certified and EMAS-approved.

CONTENTS

DEPARTMENTS

4 World Development Round-up

6 The UNDP Outlook
Domestic Needs, Foreign Support

26 Interview
Senegal's President Abdoulaye Wade on NEPAD, the Millennium Development Goals, and progress

28 MDG Watch
Millennium Development Goals: Promoting the Possible

29 Notebook
Photos of reconstruction of Iraq; Report from the African Union Summit; Launch of Small Arms Survey 2003

32 Matters of Fact

7 Argentina Struggles to Maintain Health Care During Economic Crisis

10 International Expertise Helps Government to Decentralize in Bhutan

12 A TICAD Success: Farmers in Guinea Swear by New Rice Variety Developed for Africa

19 Uniform Business Laws for Francophone Africa

22 Former Institutionalized Children Work to Restore Landmarks in Romania

24 Greater Equality for Women Sought in United Arab Emirates

15 Special Supplement for the World Parks Congress 2003

Parks for Nature Parks for People

Can a park survive in an impoverished area? In a special supplement for the World Parks Congress in Durban, South Africa, from 8-17 September, CHOICES finds that the long-term protection of parks requires—and depends on—the full involvement of the people of nearby communities.

Coming in December

New technologies continue to change the development landscape. Since 2000, more mobile phone subscriptions have been added in the South as in the North. Yet Luxembourg has more international bandwidth than all of Africa. In the December issue, CHOICES looks at the latest issues in technology and development.

Visit CHOICES Online: www.choices.undp.org

Comments? Write to **choices@undp.org**

Kofi Annan Looks to Private Sector for Development

Photo: Stephane Hollenstein/UN/DPI

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan at launch of new Commission to promote private sector enterprise, with Ernesto Zedillo, Paul Martin and Mark Malloch Brown.

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan named former Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo and Paul Martin, a leading candidate for Prime Minister of Canada, to chair a new commission that will explore ways to promote private sector growth in developing countries.

Private sector involvement, Mr. Annan said, was essential for meeting the Millennium Development Goals, the internationally agreed upon goals that call for measures ranging from halving extreme poverty, halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education by 2015.

The new panel, the Commission on the Private Sector and Development, will submit a series of recommendations for stimulating private sector growth by the end of the year. Mr. Annan said he hoped the Commission will identify how already successful programmes can be scaled up, and how business in partnership with other actors can bring about positive change.

"Building a business sector is critical for development," said UNDP Administrator Mark Malloch Brown, who promised that there would be strong follow-up on the Commission's report. "At UNDP, we're waiting for our marching orders."

Mr. Martin said, "Local entrepreneurs have to be given a chance." He added that tapping the entrepreneurial spirit, which exists everywhere, could mobilize capital for development far better than foreign direct investment. "Small and medium enterprises are the most dynamic business sectors of any country."

The problem, Mr. Zedillo said, was that there are so many bottlenecks that limit private sector development in many developing countries, and that the Commission would look at a wide range of issues, including the rule of law, corruption and access to markets. "There is no silver bullet for development," he emphasized.

Human Development Report 2003 Launched in Dublin, Maputo

Photo: Nena Terrell/UNDP

HDR launch in Dublin: From left: Bono at the podium, Ireland's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Brian Cowen, Prime Minister Bertie Ahern, and UNDP Administrator Mark Malloch Brown.

In a comprehensive examination of just what it would take to meet the Millennium Development Goals—the internationally agreed upon targets for reducing extreme poverty by half before 2015—UNDP's newly launched *Human Development Report 2003* found that the Goals can indeed be met. But not if present trends continue.

"The message of this report is that poverty is no longer inevitable," UNDP Administrator Mark Malloch Brown said, "yet we face a development crisis, with more than a billion people—one-third of them on this continent—languishing in absolute poverty, most of them without clean water to drink or enough food to eat, beset by diseases from HIV/AIDS to tuberculosis, lacking access to schools and healthcare, and living in an environment that by nearly every measure is rapidly degrading."

The Report, launched at the African Union Summit in Maputo, Mozambique, and in Dublin, Ireland, found that 54 countries became poorer in the 1990s, and in 21, a larger proportion of people are going hungry. More children are dying in 14 countries and life expectancy has fallen in 34 countries. The Report identifies 59 "priority" countries where, unless urgent action is taken, the Goals will not be met.

But the Report contends, that with the right resources and the proper commitments, the Millennium Development Goals are achievable. More resources are needed and the Report concludes that increased aid—contingent on domestic efforts to raise more local revenue and reallocate resources to poverty reduction—could put the poorest countries on track to reaching the Goals. By UN estimates, yearly aid flows must be doubled to US$100 billion, at a minimum, to meet the Goals.

Mongolia Hosting Conference on Emerging Democracies

More than 70 countries are expected to attend the Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies that will take place in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia from 10-12 September. The conference, held every two years, is intended to help guide countries on the challenges ahead as they continue the development of democratic institutions.

The problem, according to Mark Borg, an international adviser to the conference, is that there are many different models of democracy "and therefore, many different views." At present, he said, democracy is a very sensitive issue "since the predominant view is that democracy can somehow be imposed from the outside, rather than grow from the inside." He added that people need to develop their own model of democracy.

Landlocked Countries Look for Access to Markets

With some notable exceptions, such as Austria and Switzerland, landlocked countries tend to be poor. Although landlocked countries take up 12.5 percent of the world's land area and have four percent of the world's population, their combined GDP accounts for only 0.3 percent of the world total. Only 0.34 percent of total world foreign direct investment goes to landlocked developing countries.

Meeting in Almaty in the world's largest landlocked country, Kazakhstan, from 28-29 August, leaders from these countries are looking for viable solutions to their transportation problems, with the help of transit countries and the international community. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said the ministerial conference "represents the most determined effort to date by landlocked countries, the transit nations and the international community to find and implement solutions."

UNDP Goodwill Ambassadors on Visits to Ecuador, Ghana

■ To heighten awareness about the upcoming Third Tokyo International Conference on African Development, UNDP Goodwill Ambassador Misako Konno visited Ghana in July. In Ghana, Ms. Konno toured a wide range of UNDP projects promoting democratic governance, the private sector growth and information and communications technologies. The visit by Ms. Konno, a well-known actress and writer in Japan, was intended to help build partnerships between the donor community and Africa for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. TICAD has become a major framework through which Asia and Africa can collaborate to ensure Africa's development.

Photo: Guillermo Cabrera

Ms. Konno (top) interacting with Krobo Odumase primary school pupils and HIV/AIDS orphans in Ghana while Mr. Glover (bottom) takes time out from filming to see the Galapagos' giant turtles in Ecuador.

Photo: Mizuho Yuba/UNDP Tokyo

■ UNDP Goodwill Ambassador Danny Glover, in Ecuador, said the Millennium Development Goals were a "moral obligation." The actor and activist, who is making a children's film set in the Galapagos Islands at the invitation of the Arcandina Foundation there, said that "efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals of reducing poverty and hunger by 2015 are a moral obligation of humanity." He also said that equitable human development will only be possible "if we protect the environment for future generations," noting Ecuador's outstanding efforts to conserve the unique biodiversity of the Galapagos.

Call for Nominations: Equator Prize 2004

Members of a Masai community from Kenya receiving the Equator Prize 2002 at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, one of 27 communities recognized for their outstanding integration of conservation and local livelihoods. The Equator Initiative is now seeking nominations for the Equator Prize 2004, to be awarded in February 2004 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, as part of the 7th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. For further information visit: www.undp.org/equatorinitiative.

Chad Starts Oil Production

Chad, one of the poorest countries in the world—165th out of 175 on UNDP's Human Development Index—became the world's latest oil producer. The oil will flow through a pipeline to a loading facility off Cameroon. The result of a $3.7 billion project backed in part by the World Bank, Chad represents a test for efforts to ensure that revenues are used for poverty reduction objectives.

According to the World Bank, 10 percent of royalties and dividends will be held in trust for future generations; five percent will be earmarked for regional development in the oil producing area; and 80 percent will be devoted to education, health and social services, rural development, infrastructure and water management.

MARK MALLOCH BROWN

THE UNDP OUTLOOK

Domestic Needs, Foreign Support

This year's launch of the *Human Development Report*, the UNDP's flagship publication, was an extraordinary event. For the first time, the Report was launched in two countries: Ireland, with Prime Minister Bertie Ahern and U2 musician Bono and Mozambique, at the African Union Summit with President Joaquim Chissano. Previously we had chosen either a developed or a developing country but this year we wanted to illustrate the partnership that is needed for the success of the eight internationally agreed upon Millennium Development Goals: the focus of this year's HDR. These two countries symbolize the kind of actions that will need to be taken by both rich and poor countries if the Goals are to be achieved. Mozambique has transformed itself from one of the poorest countries in the world into a vibrant democracy with sustained annual growth above seven percent while Ireland has recently pledged to increase its official development assistance to the international and historic target of 0.7 percent of GNP by 2007, including special bilateral programmes for Mozambique.

In his speech in Dublin, Bono declared, "This is the first generation that can actually eliminate absolute poverty from the planet." He is right: as the HDR shows, some of the MDGs—including the overarching goal of halving extreme poverty by 2015—are largely on track to being achieved worldwide. However, that is no cause for complacency. Although the proportion of people living on less than $1 a day decreased from 30 percent to 23 percent during the 1990s, when China is excluded, the number of extremely poor people actually increased by 28 million. Meaningful achievement of the first seven Goals will require looking beyond worldwide averages and redoubling global commitment to the "partnership for development" called for in the eighth Goal: the promise by rich countries to support the efforts of developing countries through trade, aid and debt relief.

One of the key tests of this partnership will be this month's World Trade Organization's ministerial meeting in Cancun, Mexico. Indeed, trade—more than aid—is the best chance to expand the economies of the developing world. All stakeholders need to do everything they can to ensure that this round of WTO negotiations delivers on the "Development Agenda" promised two years ago when it was launched in Doha. At a minimum, negotiators should agree to steps to open their markets by reducing agricultural subsidies, ensuring that essential medicines reach people in need, and curtailing tariff peaks on industrial products—sometimes reaching 900 percent—where developing countries often have comparative advantage.

Photo: Nina Berman/UNDP

"The right to live like a human being is what we're talking about."
—Bono

However, trade is not enough. Many countries are caught in "poverty traps," constrained by small domestic markets, landlocked territory, or crushing debt. They need increased aid to support their domestic reforms. Here the signs are promising. In the last year, the world has seen a welcome reversal of the almost decade-long decrease in aid. Currently, worldwide assistance stands at around $57 billion annually, with OECD projections showing an increase from 2001 levels of $16 billion by 2006. However, this remains well short of the minimum additional $50 billion needed to meet the MDGs and recent budget pressures have caused some donor governments to back away from their previously stated commitments. Even if aid volumes doubled, total donor assistance would be around 0.44 percent of GNP, roughly equivalent to 1960s levels, and still significantly below the 0.7 percent target recently reaffirmed at the Financing for Development Conference in Monterrey, Mexico and the Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development.

The requirements of Goal 8 are balanced by the first seven Goals, which are aimed mainly at developing countries. To maximize the impact of rich country assistance and complete their side of the deal, poor countries must undertake nationally owned, good faith, political, economic and social reforms such as combating corruption, encouraging entrepreneurship, and improving basic services, especially in health and education. This issue of CHOICES describes some inspiring examples where this is happening now in areas from reforming business laws to decentralizing governance. We need to build on and scale up these success stories. Only then can this partnership become a reality and only then can we succeed in Bono's challenge. ■

Mark Malloch Brown is Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme.

DOMESTIC NEEDS

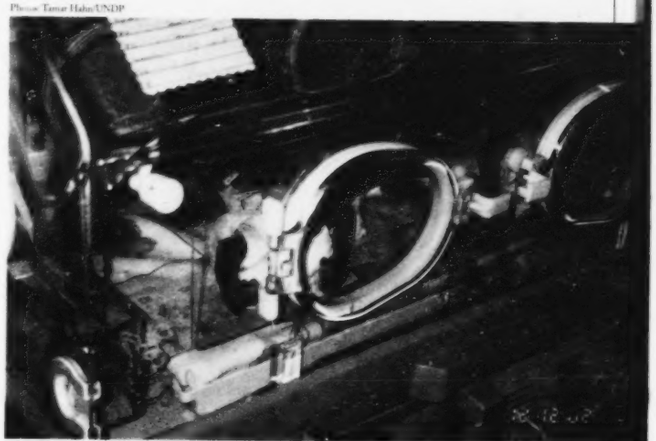
ARGENTINA

Struggles to Maintain Health Care During Economic Crisis

Joint action by international organizations halts sharp decline in health care

BY TAMAR HAHN

Photos: Tamar Hahn/UNDP



Two babies in an incubator—a desperate measure.

Left: Eduardo Fernandez Sarda, chief engineer at the Garrahan Pediatric Hospital in Buenos Aires, centre, training staff in Tucuman maternity hospital.

San Miguel de Tucuman, Argentina

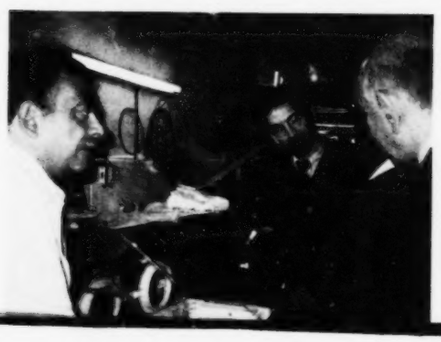
Early last year the 30-year-old X-ray machine at Nuestra Señora de la Merced Maternity Hospital broke down. A few weeks later, one of the few available respirators followed suit and, soon after, a baby incubator became unusable. By that time there were no more disposable gloves or intravenous tubes or needles.

The public maternity hospital, in Tucuman, a province in Argentina's impoverished north western region, had been in steady decline for years, paralleling the downward curve of Argentina's economy. But as the country's economy collapsed in late 2001, Nuestra Señora de la Merced went from a hospital in trouble to a hospital that was incapable of providing even the most basic care.

Premature babies were placed in broken incubators and crowded in small rooms. In some cases two babies shared an incubator, exponentially increasing the risk of infection and death. In a matter of months doctors and nurses watched in horror as more and more of their young patients began to die for lack of proper treatment. Of the 748 children under a year old who died in Tucuman last year, 527 died at Nuestra Señora de la Merced.

An economic disaster, a human tragedy

Following years of economic recession, Argentina defaulted on its foreign debt of US$132 billion in December 2001, the largest national default ever recorded.



According to UNDP Resident Representative in Argentina, Carmelo Angulo, it was just a few years ago that the UN system was about to leave Argentina because the country seemed to be doing so well. "But the collapse of the economy completely changed the picture. Today, poverty and lack of basic medical supplies in certain regions of Argentina is up to levels seen today in Central America, so the UN system went from having a very modest presence in the country to responding to a humanitarian emergency."

Mr. Angulo explained that most donor countries and international organizations still hold on to Argentina's old image as a country that is doing well, a prime example of structural adjustment. "The reality is that the situation here has deteriorated quite dramatically. Up to 60 percent of the population now lives in poverty."

The collapse of the Nuestra Señora de la Merced maternity hospital is not an isolated case. Central and local governments, which fund public hospitals, are now unable to provide even the most basic medical supplies. The devaluation of the local currency makes it prohibitively expensive to buy spare parts

With its economy reeling and unemployment high, the people of San Miguel de Tucuman have little choice but to go to the public hospital.

Woman waiting to see the doctor. The standard of care has significantly dropped and infant mortality rates have risen. Right, the Nuestra Señora de la Merced maternity hospital, originally built as a state ministry building 150 years ago.

to fix the broken equipment that is piling up in hospital basements. At the same time, a growing number of patients, having lost their jobs and are no longer covered by health insurance, are flocking to public hospitals.

By September 2002, the collapse of so many Argentinian hospitals became a humanitarian emergency, prompting the governor of Chaco, one of the most affected provinces, to request urgent assistance from the UNDP office in Buenos Aires.

In response, PabloVinocur, a public policy adviser at UNDP's Argentina office, contacted the local offices of UNICEF, and the Pan American Health Organization, which serves as the Regional Office for the Americas of the World Health Organization, and together, the three agencies drew a total of $200,000 from their own budgets to put together an emergency package. The funds were earmarked for the purchase of basic supplies for the five public hospitals in most desperate need in the northern provinces of Chaco, Misiones and Tucuman. By January 2003, the Humanitarian Emergency Programme was up and running and supplies were on their way to the five hospitals, including Nuestra Señora de La Merced.

"The emergency package for the hospitals marked the first time that UN agencies in Argentina partnered with each other," says Mr. Vinocur. "By working together we were able to respond quickly and efficiently. In fact, the inter-agency partnership model was so successful that it was later replicated during the devastating floods that left thousands homeless in the northeastern province of Santa Fe in April 2003."

From sugar cane and lemon trees to shanty-towns

San Miguel de Tucuman, the capital of the province of Tucuman, lies in a lush valley hemmed in by the foothills of the Andes and is home to about 1.34 million people, 800,000 of whom live in poverty. Sugar cane and lemon trees give way to shanty towns and garbage piles on the road leading to the city centre. Most of the stately parks and plazas that once made Tucuman famous as "Argentina's Garden" are now strewn with rubbish and overgrown weeds. The ornate colonial buildings that bore witness to its better days as a commercial hub linking Buenos Aires to Peru are covered with soot from the old buses and cars that negotiate the potholed streets.

The Nuestra Señora de la Merced maternity hospital, originally built to house a state ministry 150 years ago, is a boxy whitewashed structure with several incongruous additions sprouting from its side and its back. It is a crowded and hectic place with dozens

In a lush valley hemmed in by the foothills of the Andes, Tucuman, once known as Argentina's Garden, now faces poverty rates that exceed 60 percent.

of people swarming in the crowded hallways and going up and down an old marble staircase that links the first and second floors.

"The hospital is overflowing," explains Dr. Eugenia Schujman, the hospital's administrator. "It is designed to accommodate 6,000 deliveries a year but we are performing 12,000. We don't have enough beds or supplies but we have no choice. Many people have lost their jobs and are no longer covered by insurance so they can't afford private facilities. How can I turn them away?"

Reversing the decline

The disposable supplies and new equipment sent by the Humanitarian Emergency Programme have helped. Rusty incubators have been cleaned up, new respirators breathe life into the tiny bodies of premature babies and basic screening tests are helping to detect and protect against potential complications during pregnancy.

And the programme has also helped fix much of the broken equipment. In addition to shuttling between the three provinces participating in the emergency project to maintaining hospital equipment, Eduardo Fernandez Sarda, chief engineer at the Garrahan Pediatric Hospital in Buenos Aires and one of Argentina's leading experts in medical equipment, recently conducted a training session in Buenos Aires with six technicians from the hospitals in the provinces of Tucuman, Misiones and Chaco that took part in the emergency project. The technicians learned how to repair respirators, incubators and other machinery and met with some of the main providers of medical equipment in order to learn more about their products.

Mr. Fernandez is also creating a virtual communications network between his office in Buenos Aires and the technicians in the provinces. "By using e-mail they can get in touch with me when a machine is down and I can explain to them how to repair it," says Mr. Fernandez. "They can also communicate among themselves and learn from one another's experiences. Otherwise, once I'm gone and a machine fails, they will be back to square one."

An uncertain future

Soledad Gonzalez, a 20-year-old single mother with vague plans for the future, stands with her nose glued to the window separating her from her baby, Lucila. Weighing barely three pounds, Lucila's diminutive hands are clenched in a tight fist and despite her fragility, the doctors say she is making steady progress and is expected to be released in a few weeks. In the meantime, her mother comes to feed her every three hours and follows her progress.

Trained nurses are still in short supply for a hospital that is prepared for 6,000 deliveries a year, but actually performs 12,000.

Lucila is part of a trend that has seen the number of premature and underweight babies increase by almost three percent, mostly as a result of malnutrition. But while the programme was able to help Lucila, the funds put together by the three UN agencies have run out and, unless additional resources from other donors are forthcoming, the flow of supplies will end. According to Mr. Angulo, discussions are underway with European donors to try to secure funding for the continuation of the project.

"The assistance that we have received from this emergency programme has been invaluable," says Dr. Evelina Chapman, a hospital pediatrician. "The question is what will happen after the project ends. Our needs are enormous and our problems are very much a result of the economic and social crisis in Argentina. Until the overall situation in the country begins to improve we will continue to face a daily quixotic struggle to provide care." ■

Tamar Hahn is a freelance journalist who writes about development issues for Latin American and US publications.

Many of the mothers in Tucuman are young, single and face daunting challenges ahead.

Argentina

AT A GLANCE

Population: 37.5 million

Area: 2,766,890 sq km

Human Development Ranking: 34 of 173 countries

Adult literacy rate: 96.9%

Annual population growth rate: 1%

Life expectancy at birth: 73.9 years

GDP per capita: $11,320

Source: *Human Development Report 2003*

DOMESTIC NEEDS

FOREIGN SUPPORT

International Expertise Helps Government to Decentralize in BHUTAN

People take the lead after years of waiting for something to happen

BY K.E.S. KIRBY DORJI

GASA, BHUTAN

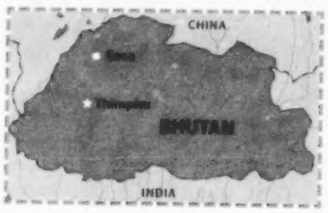
When Dasho Chencho Tshering started the steep two-day walk up an often leech-infested mule track to his new office last April, he knew he was in for a challenge.

Last spring he was taking over as governor of Gasa, Bhutan's largest and least populated district, and the only one of 20 districts in the country that has no motor roads. It's a place so remote, even by Himalayan standards, that every item brought in has to be carried up on the backs of horses or people—which is why Chencho Tshering's office has no huge, bulky photocopier, although it has solar-powered laptop computers.

"Everyone in Bhutan believes Gasa is such a backward district," says the 40-year-old, Australian-educated governor, a former government auditor. "I'd heard the people weren't forthcoming and often didn't pay much attention to government matters."

One reason people in Gasa and elsewhere didn't talk to their officials in the past was that, up until recently, district governors were perceived as almost medieval lords, whose word was law and who could not be questioned.

Yet Chencho Tshering was in for a surprise when he went on his first tour of the four local "blocks" that make up the district. The yak herders and others who live in Gasa, which sprawls along the Tibetan border, had opinions about what development they wanted—lots of them. They weren't afraid to express them. And they weren't afraid to act on them.



"We could discuss things easily," recalls Chencho Tshering, sounding not at all unhappy that he missed the medieval-lord period. "I sensed that I could really work with the people." As a result, new plans approved by the people are in place for income-generating cultivation of high-altitude vegetables such as radish, turnips, cabbage and beetroot, as well as training of yaks as exotic riding animals for tourists.

Photo: Yannick Jouris/UNDP

A woman in Eastern Bhutan carrying a ballot box to the nearest polling place—a full day's walk.

Governance is a two-way street

All across Bhutan, this new brand of people's participation represents a huge change from just a few years ago, when many Bhutanese still looked at development as "one-way traffic" driven by national Ministries. One official in the capital of Thimphu observed, "People tended to just sit there waiting for something to fall into their laps."

Now, the days of waiting are over. As the government's decentralization policy takes hold in Bhutan, a quiet revolution is under way, all contributing to King Jigme Singye Wangchuck's progressive vision of Gross National Happiness—an idea that looks beyond simple indicators of wealth that incorporates other aspects of well-being—as well as to the Millennium Development Goals, a series of internationally agreed upon targets to reduce poverty.

In the last year, overall responsibility for local development planning and implementation has been devolved to the local level. Gasa district represents a microcosm of the changes taking place across the nation: Even in far-flung Lunana block, a 10-day walk over 5,200-metre passes, ordinary Bhutanese are determining both the content and direction of the national development agenda.

Harvesting rice, the main staple food of the Bhutanese diet.

Bhutanese in remote areas want new roads so they will not need so many horses, which compete for valuable grazing land.

Much hope is resting on assistance from the newly-initiated Decentralization Support Programme, funded by UNDP, the United Nations Capital Development Fund and SNV, the Dutch development organization. The programme grew out of a pilot UNDP/UNCDF project that began in 1999 to bring people into the planning process at the block level, in large part, through a system of political and financial decentralization that provided budgets directly to local officials.

Designed now to help support three levels of governance —the centre, the district and the block—the new programme aims to create a local environment for effective decentralization; to increase public participation in development through provision of up to US$15,000 annually to some 36 blocks; and to build the capacity of the Ministry of Home Affairs to provide management support to the localities.

Although people's participation actually began as early as 1991 with the establishment of block development committees, this "new era represents the determination of His Majesty the King to further empower the grassroots level in terms of decision-making," according to Lyonpo Jigmi Y. Thinley, Minister for Home Affairs.

The village of Gasa, where people voted for the first time in local and national elections last year.

Bhutan

AT A GLANCE

Population: 2.1 million

Area: 47,000 sq km

Human Development Ranking: 136 of 173 countries

Adult literacy rate: 47%

Annual population growth rate: 2.6%

Life expectancy at birth: 62.5years

GDP per capita: $1,833

Source: *Human Development Report 2003*

Going to the polls

In a watershed event last year, the nation—for the first time—voted in local elections for the leadership of local blocks. In Gasa, 1,459 voters were eligible. Remotest-of-the-remote Lunana was among the first blocks in the country to elect a candidate who had not been previously appointed to office before.

Then last May, Gasa held similar elections for representatives to the National Assembly. "People walked for hours—and some for days—to cast their secret ballot in a clearing in the forest," says UNDP Bhutan Deputy Resident Representative Deirdre Boyd, who witnessed the election on the border of Khatoe and Khame blocks in Gasa. "They had set up a traditional white Bhutanese tent with Buddhist symbols on it, and people had to exit away from where their neighbours were standing so they couldn't be asked who they voted for. Impressive precautions had been taken."

Support for the continuing evolution of people's participation remains high at UNDP. "People's participation does not take place overnight. It has to be learned and promoted, and is taking time, resources, and perseverance," says Renata Lok Dessallien, UNDP Resident Representative in Bhutan. "It may involve making mistakes from learning-by-doing, but in the long run we think the country will benefit. Bhutan is doing very well in bringing this change about."

Throughout, Chencho Tshering—and the people of Gasa—are hoping for a road to be built in their district during the current five-year development plan so that delivering development activities gets easier. Chencho Tshering knows that if the road comes, livelihoods will improve. "People have told me that if there's a road, they can get rid of most of their horses. This is actually a benefit to the environment, because there's a serious scarcity of grazing land, with yaks and horses competing. This is what the people want," he says. "And the people are usually quite sensible." ■

Dasho Chencho Tshering, Governor of Gasa District.

K.E.S. Kirby Dorji is a freelance writer and communications consultant based in Thimphu, Bhutan.

DOMESTIC NEEDS

FOREIGN SUPPORT

Farmers in GUINEA Swear By New Rice Variety Developed for Africa

Asian-African cooperation produces tougher, higher yielding rice

Photos: Sadio Barry/UNDP

Villagers in Faranah sowing Nerica, the rice variety for Africa that produces two to three times the yield of traditional varieties.

BY SEKOUNA KEITA

FARANAH, GUINEA

"Warda" rice is now the rage in this farming town, some 470 kilometres east of the country's capital, Conakry. Faster growing and better tasting, this new rice is providing bigger yields and higher earnings to local farmers, making this new rice a sensation across Guinea, West Africa, and now, in East Africa as well.

The new rice, actually known as the New Rice for Africa—or Nerica—is a blend of rice that embodies some of the best qualities of Asian and African strains that have been bred specifically for soil and climate conditions in Africa.

The project stands as a major success of the partnership between Africa and Japan as countries prepare to mark the Third Tokyo International Conference on African Development in Tokyo from 29 September to 1 October 2003. Japan, with UNDP, has supported the development of the rice strain as well as the Africa Rice Initiative, launched last year, to improve the dissemination of Nerica and contribute to the food security of Africa.

In only a few years of experimentation, the new rice, developed in 1994 by the West Africa Rice Development Association, has already boosted the incomes of subsistence farmers. Just five kilometres away, in Nérédou, the seed breeder Kabinet Traoré is harvesting his half-hectare, sown in a lowland area in the off season, three months earlier than usual. Now well into his 50s, Mr. Traoré has seen his income progressively increase since he started growing Nerica, from 50,000 Guinean Francs (US$25) in the first year—a large sum in itself in rural Guinea—to 250,000 Guinean Francs ($129) in 2002.

"Since 1997, I've been growing this new rice, which brings me a great deal and allows me to support the family better," says Mr. Traoré. "It's easier to grow than our local varieties, because a little water is all it takes and you earn a lot of money."

The extra money has helped. "It enabled me to send two of my children to school," says Mr. Traoré. "Next time school starts, I will be able to buy the uniform and school supplies for the other three whom I am planning to register."

Developing the "New Rice for Africa"

According to Aly Conde, coordinator of the Nerica community-based Seed System in Guinea, local rice varieties

TICAD—PROMOTING ASIAN-AFRICAN COOPERATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

TICAD, the Tokyo International Conference on African Development, is more than a conference. It has become a major framework through which Africa and Asia can collaborate to ensure Africa's development.

The first Tokyo Conference was held in 1993 and ushered in a continuing process of support for Africa and consensus-building around African development priorities.

TICAD's 10th anniversary is being marked at the third Tokyo Conference—TICAD III—from 29 September to 1 October 2003. This landmark session is addressing regional needs in line with the continent's own self-generated initiative, NEPAD—the New Partnership for Africa's Recovery.

The Conference will stress the need to meet the UN's Millennium Development Goals, to intensify African-Asian cooperation, to consolidate peace and good governance in Africa, to reinforce the roles of the private sector and civil society, and other vital issues for Africa's future.

Nerica grows much faster than traditional varieties and is ready for harvest at a time when granaries—and often stomachs—are empty.

yielded only 500 to 600 kilogrammes per hectare. With demand for rice rising in the region, he says, new varieties were needed. Farmers quickly noticed that the Nerica varieties produced between 1,200 to 1,500 kilogrammes per hectares without fertilize:, and 2,500 to 3,000 kilogrammes per hectare with fertilizer.

August and September are traditionally tough months in rural Guinea, a time when the local rice varieties are growing but the granaries are virtually empty. "It is during this difficult time that the Nerica harvest takes place and the farmers are able to utter a sigh of relief," says Mr. Conde.

Almost all the farmers in the Faranah region have adopted Nerica, either through groups or individually. June, which marks the start of the rains, is the period for sowing Nerica.

In mid-June, Mamady Camara, another farmer in Nérédou, has already finished planting his one-hectare field and is in the course of sowing it. In his 60s, he works alone, using a hoe, because his children attend school. "Last year, I used all my Nerica harvest to feed the family," he recalls. "But this year I'm not going to eat it. I'm going to sell it all because I have too many people asking for seed. The villagers are after me every day," adding that he will grow a local variety in another field to feed his family.

Less than three kilometres away, Famoro Camaro, who has only one arm, continues preparing and digging his fields. An agronomist who took early retirement from the civil service, he returned to his native village about 10 years ago. For the third year in succession, he is growing his hectare of Nerica with high hopes.

"It's a rice that enables me to bridge the gap between two local crops," he says, "because it falls between them." Relying on Nerica for his planning, Mr. Camaro adds, "I have two wives and 17 children who are almost all going to school. Nerica is a great help to me in taking care of all these people."

Women's associations benefit from new rice

In the rural community of Tiro, Bamba Camara, who chairs the Union of five producers' groups known as "Benkadi" says Nerica has been a big hit among women growers. "The first year, we received 25 kilogrammes of seeds which we sowed," which, she says, "surprised us all. Since then, we've been investing all out in this crop." Surrounded by a number of women in the group in their field on the banks of the Niger River, which has its source here before flowing throughout West Africa, Mrs. Camara maintains "our commitment to promoting Nerica will be unfailing."

Mamady Camara, preparing to tend his land that is growing Nerica.

There has been a special initiative to support women who produce and distribute Nerica. The National Coordination Office for the Nerica project has encouraged the women to establish three unions of groups in the villages of Tiro, Kamara and Yatia-Dantilia. The Tiro Union is scheduled to plant 45 hectares in the Faranah region this year and the regional head of the extension service, Ibrahima Yansané, says that since the beginning of June, seed stocks have been available to all the groups from all the leading farmers who grow seeds. With an average of 2.5 tons per hectare, "the yield should be 112.5 tons of seeds," he estimates.

Guinea

AT A GLANCE

Population: 8.2 million

Area: 245,857 sq km

Human Development Ranking: 157 of 173 countries

Adult literacy rate: 41%

Annual population growth rate: 2.2%

Life expectancy at birth: 48.5years

GDP per capita: $1,960

Source: Human Development Report 2003

Labya Camara, one of the most successful Nerica farmers, with his family.

Kouta Kamara, president of a local growers union, finds Nerica is tasty, softer and easier to store for longer periods.

A second project, with a total cost of $80,000 financed by Japan, aims to reduce the time women spend working on winnowing, drying and dehulling the rice, as well as on marketing and environmental protection. The project became operational this May, and the Unions have received seeds and inputs to sow 60 hectares, which will produce, according to the most realistic estimates, a harvest of 120 tons, or three times higher than last year. In addition, each Union has two trial fields of *niébé*, a variety of bean with a short, two-month growing cycle. This legume helps restore soil nutrients to fields growing Nerica, without any fertilizer inputs. The vast majority of the farmers are prepared to use this natural soil fertilization system.

Like the men, women are going in for "nericulture," as it is now known. Mrs. Kouta Kamara, who heads a producer's group, says that she and her aging husband earned more than $120 in hard cash from the 2002 harvest and that the new rice is tasty, softer and easier to store for longer periods of time. "The grains are small and white and swell better when they are cooked," she says. "With Nerica, the whole family is happy with the meal."

Lack of equipment limits spread of new rice

The Nerica farmers are determined to produce more, but say they are limited in their production because they lack equipment and as a result, have to settle for subsistence farming. The equipment shortage is readily apparent with the "daba"—a hand-held implement, remaining as the most common tool. Only a few privileged people own animal-drawn ploughs, and access to inputs, fertilizers and herbicides, is difficult, or the prices are well beyond the farmers' reach.

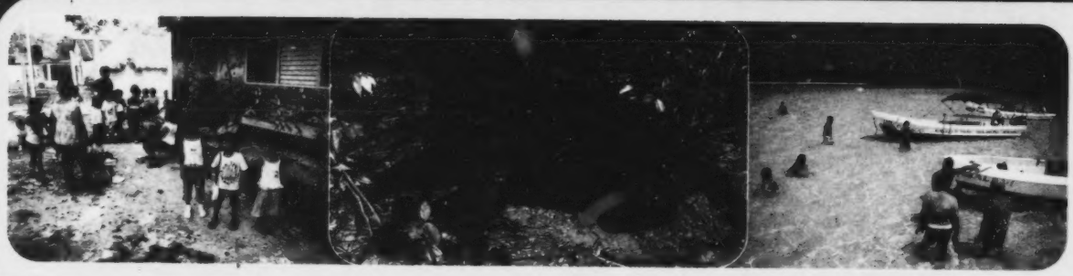
But the new rice has made Layba Camara a rice farmer superstar, and he even represented Guinean farmers at last year's World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa.

"I only had a little in the way of equipment for my field," he says. "I would say that if you have an animal-drawn plough and a little money, you have a good basis for going in for farming." He says that in past years, he planted four hectares of Nerica but this year, due to poor health, he intends to sow only three hectares.

"The whole family helps me till the field," he says. "It's from working the land that I derive everything: food, clothing, the cost of schooling for my children. I'm in the course of building another house just beside the one I live in. I already have the corrugated iron, the cement and all the other materials. It's thanks to growing Nerica that I've been able to obtain all that." ■

Sekouna Keita is a freelance writer based in Conakary, Guinea.

Seed producer Kabinet Traoré has seen his income progressively rise since he switched to Nerica.



Parks Projecting Benefits Well Beyond Their Boundaries

Better forest management brings economic and biodiversity benefits to Yucatan

BY DAVID DUDENHOEFER

NOHBEC, MEXICO

Not far from Cancun, down the white sandy beaches that line the blue waters along Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, lies one of North America's most significant nature preserves, the Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve—a World Heritage Site—that is home to more than 100 mammal species, 346 bird species, and more than 900 species of plants. Protected and well managed, the Reserve has so far been successful in conserving the Peninsula's unique and varied biodiversity.

But the popularity of Cancun and the Yucatan coast has added extra pressure on the unprotected forests outside the Reserve's boundaries. There are fears that unregulated development of the area will turn Sian Ka'an—which in Mayan means "Where the Sky is Born"—into a non-viable biological island.

Yet while conservationists hope to build a biodiversity corridor from Sian Ka'an to the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve in the middle of the Yucatan Peninsula, which would ensure that large animals such as the jaguar would have enough room to roam, there is growing recognition that the local indigenous people have to materially benefit from conservation efforts.

Parks and poverty cannot coexist

There are presently more than 44,000 protected areas around the world, or about 10 percent of the world's land surface. As a reservoir of the world's biodiversity, these areas provide water, protect soils, filter the air and hold the promise of improving foods and medicines. Yet there has been criticism of these parks within the development community by those who believe that the preservation of wilderness areas comes at the expense of the people who live nearby.

The World Parks Congress 2003, to be held in Durban, South Africa from 8-17 September, is considered by many to represent a turning point in the debate, and a convergence of thinking of conservationists and development officials.

According to Mark Malloch Brown, Administrator of UNDP, one of the major sponsors of the Congress, there is

- Parks and protected areas deliver critical ecosystem services on which long-term human survival depends, and are a key indicator for the Millennium Development Goals.
- Parks and poverty cannot coexist. While ensuring a sustainable future, we cannot leave surrounding communities in poverty.
- Parks are for life, for development, for the future, for all people.
- Park managers, local communities, indigenous peoples, and other stakeholders must work together to resolve conflicts and maximize the benefits for all.
- Good governance—how decisions are made and management effected—is critical at all levels—national, local, community and the park's themselves.

Parks for Nature Parks for People

Mexico

AT A GLANCE

Population: 100.5 million

Area: 1,972,550 sq km

Human Development Ranking: 55 of 173 countries

Adult literacy rate: 91.4%

Population living on less than US$2 per day: 24.3%

Annual population growth rate: 1.2%

Life expectancy at birth: 73.1 years

GDP per capita: $8,430

Source: Human Development Report 2003

In the Yucatan Peninsula local communities have been successful in conserving the forest, but not, until now, in making a living.

now an acknowledgement that parks can't exist in a vacuum. "Parks and poverty cannot coexist. While parks deliver enormous benefits for the global community, in protecting biodiversity and ecosystem services, and in mitigating the effects of climate change, they also have to provide direct benefits for the people who live nearby," Mr. Malloch Brown adds.

Parks and the people

For the members of the Mayan community of NohBec, just 20 kilometres west of the Sian Ka'an, the forest has traditionally provided a living from the hardwoods, palm leaves and *chicle*—the traditional base of chewing gum. Their management of the land is based on a system of communal land tenure, the result of the *ejido* system that was established in Mexico in the 1930s. There are 216 families that belong to the NohBec *ejido* cooperative and they own 24,000 hectares of land.

The problem is that the forest, while conserved, has not produced big dividends for the community—until now. According to Saul Blanco, a forester, the community received meagre payment from private logging concessions for the tons of mahogany that were felled from its forest. "We had very little awareness of what wood was worth at that time," says Mr. Blanco.

According to Francisco Montalvo, secretary of NohBec's commuity council, a mix of poor administration and restrictions due to the *ejido's* unique legal status was pushing the operation toward a financial crisis just a few years ago.

"The council members are people with a lot of experience in the forest, who want to preserve the forest, but who don't know much about administration," he said.

A crisis was averted with assistance from an international collaboration administered by UNDP known as COMPACT, or the Community Management of Protected Area Conservation. COMPACT is a joint effort between the United Nations Foundation and the Global Environment Facility's Small Grants Programme that has helped local communities protect the biodiversity in and around World Heritage Sites in six countries on three continents.

COMPACT's support for NohBec began in 2001 and has resulted in a number of fundamental changes to how the community does business. According to Julio Moure, COMPACT coordinator for Sian Ka'an, a series of training sessions have been held to help the *ejido's* various departments coordinate their work better and improve management of their forest resources.

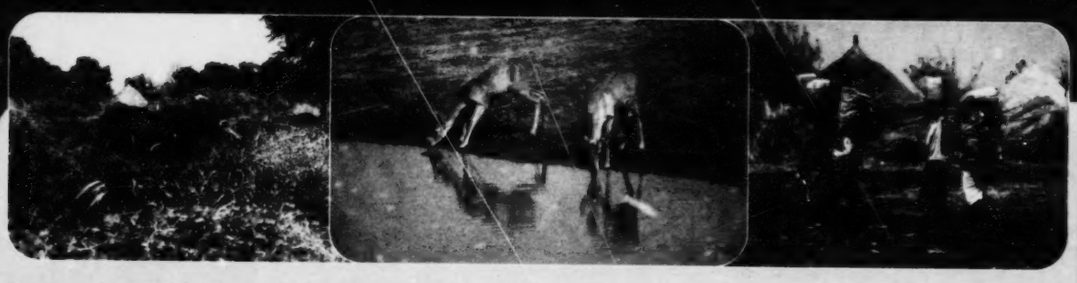
The changes have brought results. Last year, enough profit was earned to give each *ejido* member a dividend payment of 22,100 Pesos (US $2,200). And Mr. Blanco says that as profits rise, there are plans to invest more in equipment and infrastructure improvements in order to lower waste, and further increase profits.

Building a biodiversity corridor

Mr. Moure explains that there are many *ejidos* in the region with between 25,000 and 40,000 hectares of forest each, and that could be managed better. "According to LANDSAT images, approximately 70 percent of Sian Ka'an's buffer zone is covered with forest that is in good, or very good shape," says Mr. Moure. "I believe that within another five years, we could have about 500,000 hectares of forest under community sustainable management." ■

Freelance journalist David Dudenhoefer has been covering environmental issues in Latin America for more than a decade and has previously contributed to CHOICES.

- There are more than 44,000 protected areas in the world and they cover almost 10 percent of the world's land surface.
- Less than one percent of the world's seas are protected.
- Only one-tenth of the estimated $30-$45 billion annually needed for proper protection of protected areas is actually allocated.
- Almost one-third of all known animal species live in so-called hotspots that together cover 1.4 percent of the world's surface, but only about 37 percent of these are currently protected.
- About 80 percent of the population in developing countries rely on traditional medicines, mainly derived from plants for their primary health care; protected areas are the major and sometimes only reservoir for many of these plants.
- In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, people receive 75 percent of their animal protein from wild sources; in Malawi, Nepal and Tanzania people rely on firewood and dung for 90 percent of their energy needs.
- Protected areas can make money: In Costa Rica, annual tourism revenues of around $330 million more than cover protected area outlays of $12 million a year.



Migrants Near Dinder Park Balance Livelihoods and Ecosystems

People shift priorities from tree cutting to tree planting

BY ALULA BERHE KIDANI

ELAEBAIK, SUDAN

The tall, wild grass that grows along the banks of the streams and rivers in Sudan's Dinder National Park still offers a modicum of refuge for the lions, leopards, waterbucks, baboons and buffaloes that roamed the area when the park was established almost 70 years ago. But increasingly, the more than 27 species of large mammals and 230 species of birds that live in the relatively flat grassy terrain are forced to compete with people for the resources that the park offers.

Sudan's problems have not escaped Dinder's 10,291 square kilometres tucked along the country's eastern border with Ethiopia; the park has been affected by the decades-long civil war, enduring droughts and resulting famines. At present, 10 villages lie within the park and more than 40 villages just outside, increasingly straining park resources, including vegetation and water. Herders, poachers, charcoal makers and others have also contributed to the loss of the park's habitat.

Recognizing that an insecure population cannot coexist with a secure park, the Global Environment Facility and UNDP are working with communities along the parks boundaries to find ways to meet people's needs without endangering the grounds.

While plans for the overall management of the park are still being finalized, steps are already being taken to improve community involvement in decisions over the use of park resources, the development of a park buffer zone as well as a transitional zone. To iron out problems, park officials and villagers now discuss solutions in the village development councils that have been established in virtually every community.

Demand for food, fuel and pastures

The need for food, fuel and pastures has forced people to look to the park for their needs. While awaiting final approval on a park-wide land use plan, a number of projects are underway in the buffer area to maintain the park's tree cover.

The village of Elaebaik, along the Rahad River and a scant two kilometres from the park—well within earshot of the lions that roar during the night—is home to 3,850 people and consists mostly of migrants from Western Sudan who fled the droughts that plagued Sudan in the 1970s. Officially considered as internally displaced people, the villagers are subsistence farmers, occasionally earning some extra cash through the sale of charcoal.

For these groups, the park serves as the major source for their fuel—from wood. In an attempt to curtail habitat loss due to deforestation in and around the park, UNDP and GEF have contributed $500,000 and $750,000, respectively, to support work in 26 villages to ensure that people's development requirements are met while protecting the park's varied and extensive biodiversity.

Planting forests

While the villagers had formerly cut trees to make charcoal, they now are planting trees in "people's forests." Starting in December 2002, even before the project funds were available, the villages began planting sunat, or *Acacia nilotica* trees, according to Mohamed Radwan, secretary of Elaebaik Village Development Committee. The trees offer a sustainable supply of wood, as well as fodder for livestock. According to Mr. Radwan, the trees are planted three metres apart with the surrounding lands used for growing vegetables that provide the villagers with cash income and food. So far, 17 hectares have been planted for the participating 100 households, and there are plans to add another 15 hectares for 60 additional households.

"The project awareness programme was the turning

point in converting our village people from tree cutters to forest planters," says Mr. Radwan. "The knowledge was like sunlight and showed us the fatal impact of the continuation of tree cutting on the sustainability of our village and the villages around us."

To offset the loss of fuel from homemade charcoal, a UNDP pilot project, at the request of the villagers, has introduced butane gas in Um-el-kwra village. Ahmed Hamza, a village official, says Um-el-kwra was chosen as a distribution centre for eight villages and the programme, which started with 20 cylinders of the gas in June 2002, has now expanded to 150 cylinders, and is growing. The programme has allowed the villagers to spread out the installation costs, but they still must pay for the gas they use.

Livestock herders looking for pastures

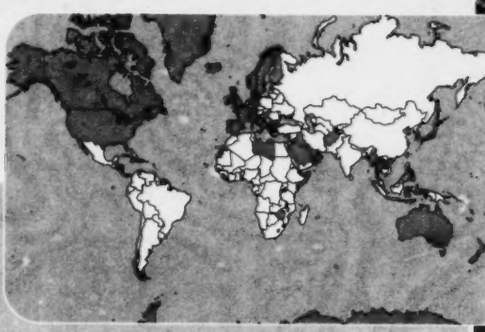
Dinder has also become a magnet for livestock herders. "During the last 20 years," says Omer Egami, a UNDP project manager, "the pastoralists have lost their traditional grazing grounds due to the expansion of mechanized farming. Their situation has been complicated by the long episodes of drought and the increase in the human and animal population." As a result, Mr. Egami says, pastoralists view the park as an important resource and have often overused the park by grazing cattle, sheep and goats in sensitive areas.

The idea, according to Mutasim Bashir Nimir, UNDP project manager for the Dinder project, is to open up traditional grazing routes that have been closed to the pastoralists. "It's an important issue. We have to find natural grazing areas that are compatible with the park."

Although the villages in the Rahad region are deeply traditional communities, the project has focused on the role of women. At least five members of each village development council are women and on some councils, women play lead roles.

After 80-year-old Haja Hawa Aburaga of the El Gmam Kndro village was elected, she has emerged as the focal point for all village activities and is the resource person for both men and women. According to Mrs. Aburaga, who has lived all her life in the village, there have been some very substantial improvements in village life, including the clean water hand pump and a small school. ■

Alula Berhe Kidani is a reporter for the Khartoum Monitor *in Sudan.*



COUNTRIES IN WHICH UNDP WORKS ON PROTECTED AREAS

UNDP is assisting communities in more than 121 countries to maintain and sustainably use the biodiversity that underpins human welfare and economic development through:

The Equator Initiative—UNDP supports communities in all regions including in Kenya, where the Il Ngwesi Group Ranch has succeeded in reducing poverty, providing basic health and education services while conserving biodiversity through ecotourism and a community owned and managed trust; in Fiji, assisting the Locally Managed Marine Area network; and in Costa Rica, working with the Talamanca Initiative on protected areas such as the Gandoca-Manzanillo National Wildlife Refuge.

The Global Environment Facility—As an implementing agency of the GEF, UNDP is supporting more than 200 projects worldwide, such as in Belize, contributing to the improved management and conservation of the MesoAmerican Barrier Reef; in Cape Verde and Senegal, providing support to new national park systems; and in Pakistan for community-based conservancies.

The GEF Small Grants Programme—Implemented by UNDP, the SGP has supported over 350 community-based initiatives in and around protected areas investing more than $8 million in 30 countries to date. In Botswana, it assisted the Lesoma Farmers Committee to install a solar-powered electric fence to keep elephants off the farm; and in Bhutan, it helped in the conservation and development of local communities through the promotion of ecotourism as an alternative sustainable livelihood.

To learn more:
UNDP-GEF: www.undp.org/gef and GEF SGP: www.undp.org/sgp
Equator Initiative: www.undp.org/equatorinitiative

Sudan

AT A GLANCE

Population: 32.2 million

Area: 2,505,810 sq km

Human Development Ranking: 138 of 173 countries

Adult literacy rate: 58.6%

Annual population growth rate: 1.8%

Life expectancy at birth: 55.4 years

GDP per capita: $1,970

Source: Human Development Report 2003

CALLING FOR NOMINATIONS for the Equator Prize 2004. Deadline: 5 October 2003. For more information: www.undp.org/equatorinitiative.

DOMESTIC NEEDS

Uniform Business Laws for Francophone AFRICA

New rules improve business climate in region

BY JEANNOT IMBS

COTONOU, BENIN

Two years ago, in a business dispute that gained widespread attention in this capital city, the corporation managing the commercial space at the Cotonou airport claimed that about half a dozen shops had overstayed their lease and demanded their eviction. The case went to court and the court agreed. The shops had to go.

One shop took a novel route: by pursuing dispute resolution under the terms of the new—but not yet tested—uniform business laws now in force in 16 African countries, the case was sent to arbitration and the shop gained a new lease until the end of this year.

The new uniform laws are part of the implementing arm of the Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa, which is almost exclusively referred to by its French acronym, OHADA. The new laws are an attempt to banish the ad hoc administration of justice between and within countries. And there is hope that a more transparent business framework will eliminate shady practices, such as the establishment of bogus corporations with illusionary capital that makes it difficult, if not impossible, to safeguard the integrity of business transactions.

"Most of the laws in force were outdated and no longer responsive to the needs of businesspeople," says Irène Ishola, a Cotonou business lawyer. In Benin, for example, she says, it was no longer possible to find out what the minimum share capital was needed to set up a company since the amounts were embodied in an old French text, and the present realities had changed. It meant that those working in the legal system had no basis for their work, and so they dispensed justice at random."

But now, in the 16 African countries that are preparing

Photo: Gental Adjinakou/UNDP

Irène Ishola, a Cotonou lawyer, says the new laws will end many questionable business practices.

Business people, from local market vendors to corporate officials, say the new legal system in Francophone Africa will make it easier to do business and resolve disputes.

Benin

AT A GLANCE

Population: 6.4 million

Area: 112,620 sq km

Human Development Ranking: 159 of 173 countries

Adult literacy rate: 38.6%

Annual population growth rate: 2.5%

Life expectancy at birth: 50.9 years

GDP per capita: $980

Source: Human Development Report 2003

Benoît Zannou, Secretary-General at Ecobank, an African regional bank operating in nine of the OHADA member states, says the new laws will be a major help in keeping clients.

to mark the 10th anniversary of a treaty, OHADA, that provides a single, modern and reliable business law that can be adapted to each country, the rules for business are now predictable and widely applicable. Over the last five years, a series of uniform laws have compelled governments and corporations to significantly change their business and accounting practices.

UNDP, which has provided financial and technical support to the process of drafting the implementing legislation for OHADA, is continuing to provide assistance for training legal personnel, along with France and the European Union.

According to UNDP Associate Administrator Zéphirin Diabré, UNDP's support for OHADA is part of an overall effort to address the issues of economic governance within the framework of NEPAD, the New Partnership for Africa's Development. "In order to invest in Africa, our private sector partners need the security of fair justice systems, legal frameworks which protect investments, clear regulations for the establishment and development of business activities." He adds, "we are doing it with OHADA, whose success is acknowledged by all."

The laws are intended to provide a continent-wide legal basis for promoting economic integration and for attracting investment. At present, Africa attracts only one percent of the world's foreign direct investment and many of the countries that have joined OHADA are among the poorest in the continent.

Courts in Benin are now applying the same business laws as courts in 15 other African nations.

"It makes the African business environment safer," says Mrs. Ishola. "Today, it is no longer possible to set up a company which exists only in name. The individuals associated with the company are known. The requisite minimum share capital is also known—and, it has to be paid up."

For businesspeople and traders across Africa, the changes have been gradual, yet noticeable and welcome. For Ibrahim Camara, a Senegalese doing business in Benin and Senegal, OHADA offers immense possibilities. "Not only can you register a company in any member state and open a branch anywhere by simply using the same company formation papers, but you can also resolve any disagreement in any member state."

The 16 countries that have joined OHADA and have enacted uniform business laws include Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo.

A Common Court of Justice and Arbitration has been established in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, a Permanent Secretariat in Yaounde, Cameroon, and a regional training school in Porto Novo, Benin, for court personnel and lawyers.

Arbitration is favoured in dispute resolution

There hasn't been an upsurge in litigation or in business disputes. But the new laws have made an impact, with the Benin High Court overturning lower court rulings based on OHADA.

But most applaud the emphasis on private arbitration to settle disputes, rather than the tedious fact-finding by the courts. Salmat Rouga, a merchant who sells clothing in Benin and food products in Niger, says the arbitration system suits him fine. "It is better to resolve problems under the authority of a figure that you all respect, in confidence, rather than going to court where the whole country will immediately know about your problems."

In the past, before the OHADA treaty, parties initially attempted to resolve their disputes by mutual agreement. When they were unsuccessful, they went to the courts. But the laws attached great importance to the locality where the companies were registered or where the contracts had been signed. Almost all proceedings were heard before the courts in the town where the company was registered. Under those conditions, settlement of a dispute turned into a real obstacle course when the two parties were from countries that were far apart, even if both countries were within the French-speaking area.

Benoît Zannou, Secretary-General at Ecobank, an African regional bank operating in nine of the OHADA member states, says OHADA promotes favourable conditions for collection, alternative ways of reaching settlement and a harmonized interpretation of the laws. "In particular," he says, "commercial arbitration offers the banks an advantageous instrument for efficient management of disputes, fully in line with the mechanisms by which the banking system operates, such as preservation of banking confiden-

New industries, such as telecommunications and oil, along with traditional businesses, will have to operate with greater transparency in OHADA countries.

tiality, rapid handling of procedures, and the concern to keep our clients."

Many that support the uniform laws are graduates of major European and American business schools. Bernard Gourlaouène, the Director-General of the Société Générale de Banques au Bénin, a subsidiary of the French Société Générale group that operates in a number of the OHADA member states, says "among other advantages relating to the needs of banking activity, the new OHADA accounting standards make it possible to rely on the financial information."

But adopting a law is only part of the process; compliance and enforcement are another. Since uniform laws were adopted, considerable efforts have been invested in training of law personnel, despite the meagre means at the disposal of these countries.

The result, according to statistics from the the Higher Regional Judicial College for training in Porto Novo, there have been 32 training sessions in 27 months that have benefited 737 trainees, and 1,110 in 15 OHADA states have attended legal "retraining" seminars.

Participants have included representatives from every stratum of the legal profession, including lawyers, notaries, bailiffs, registrars, judges, auditors and trainers. "The modules are intended to equip the participants with an understanding of OHADA law and then with theoretical and practical knowledge, to reinforce their intellectual capacities to bring about proper application of the harmonized law within the OHADA area," explains José Cueto, Representative of the European Union to the training centre.

Bernard Gourlaouène, Director-General of the Société Générale de Banques au Bénin, says the new OHADA accounting standards will make it possible to rely on the financial information.

The training is financed by a number of donors, including France, UNDP and the European Union. Governments, for their part, have helped publicize the new laws and have contributed to the retraining initiative that is expected, by the end of the year 2003-2004, to reach another 2,160 people.

Still, in Benin, Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire, many business people and small traders say that not enough effort has been made to publicize the new law. Traders, as a group, still are far behind entrepreneurs in learning about the new legal regimen.

OHADA supporters expect a solid legal foundation will encourage new businesses and investment between African countries and foreign partners.

"Even if OHADA does have shortcomings, it is taken seriously and is already the envy of the English-speaking countries," says Mrs. Ishola. ■

Jeannot Imbs is the editor and founder of La Montagne, *a publication serving Parakou in northern Benin.*

DOMESTIC NEEDS

FOREIGN SUPPORT

Former Institutionalized Children Work to Restore Landmarks in ROMANIA

Poverty and preservation are twin goals of international assistance project

While many of Bucharest's architectural and historical past have faded due to neglect, many buildings have been restored due to a programme providing jobs to 18-year-olds leaving state-run homes and institutions.

BY MIHAI CONSTANTIN

BUCHAREST, ROMANIA

In the 16th Century the Romanian ruler Mihai Viteazul, or Michael the Brave, proudly walked through the gates of the central Transylvanian city of Alba-Iulia, signifying the unification of all Romanians under one king. But today those gates are in danger of falling apart and the old city is deserted.

The gates of Alba-Iulia are only one item on a long list of historical landmarks in Romania that are threatened by years of neglect, decay and almost empty civic coffers.

Photo: Radu Vintenu/UNDP

But based on a pilot project in Bucharest, there are now plans to restore and revitalize major landmarks, many several hundred years old, across Romania.

Historic preservation has not been a priority in Romania over the last half century, as the reigning Communist regime was openly hostile toward the aristocratic and bourgeois era the old buildings stood for. Since the Communist regime was toppled in 1989, there has been no money for restoring the historical heritage.

Young adults for historical restoration

In fact, Romania has had far more pressing problems to contend with, including widespread poverty and high levels of unemployment. But it was the state of the nation's residential institutions for children that caught international attention following the fall of Communist rule, as reports of thousands of babies warehoused in substandard institutions spurred a rise in global adoption programmes.

There are still as many as 19,300 children over 14 years of age in state institutions in Romania, the result of skewed population policies in the past, and many of these children are reaching the age of 18—the age when they have to fend for themselves.

In a novel, albeit partial, solution to the problem of finding jobs for the young adults emerging from state institutions, Romania, with help from UNDP, the European Union, the Hope Foundation and local non-governmental organizations, established a programme, Beautiful Bucharest, to restore the old city in Romania's capital.

"This programme gave us a job, a house, the illusion of a normal life," say Petrica, 23, and Lenuta Cojocaru, 21, who met at a placement centre five years ago. Both children of large poor families, each entered the state institutions at the age of 10. Mr. Cojocaru has fairly good memories of growing up in the residential institution; his wife does not. Mrs. Cojocaru says she entered the orphanage after her mother died and her father was unable to raise her due to alcoholism.

Both thought their destiny together was somewhat hopeless until they heard about the Beautiful Bucharest project. "We knew we had the chance of getting a place to live together. We enlisted in the programme, had training, worked hard and two years later got married," says Mrs. Cojocaru, caressing her sleeping 14-month-old baby, Antonio in their one-room flat that was provided by the programme.

Mr. Cojocaru adds, "Here we are free. We have a normal life. It's up to us to improve it. We just have to keep up the good work."

Petrica and Lenuta Cojocaru, with their son Antonio, have been able to make a life for themselves as a result of the Beautiful Bucharest programme.

The Cojocarus are two of 83 teenage graduates of the state-run residential institutions who were selected and trained as construction workers on the restorations, for which UNDP and Romania raised US$600,000 from the city of Bucharest, NGOs and the European Union to finance the $1 million project.

The teenagers received counseling and housing, with the Hope Foundation and other NGOs providing housing for free. But the participants have to pay for their electricity and other expenses. Twelve of them, including the Cojocarus, still live in the Hope apartments.

"The project enabled almost 100 teenagers to prepare themselves for a responsible, independent adult life," says Soknan Han Jung, UNDP Resident Representative for Romania.

Through the project, the façades of six significant old buildings have been restored and three streets in the old city have been repaved. The Marriage House of the Bucharest Sector 3 district has been fully renovated and refurbished, and a school and a kindergarten have also been restored.

The Mayor of Bucharest has now requested a full-fledged revitalization strategy for the old city and the nation's Prime Minister has declared the historic centre of Bucharest an "area of national interest" in the hope that the old city will become a tourist area.

Going national

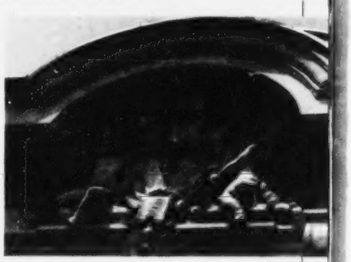
The results of the Bucharest project have inspired even bigger thinking. Building on the solid relationships developed between various institutions and government authorities, the Beautiful Bucharest programme has now expanded to the national level to 10 Romanian cities, with support from UNDP, the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family, the National Agency for Employment, and the Ministry of Transport, Housing and Tourism.

"We don't just paint building façades. We strengthen, repair and restore them and build up community pride for their historical patrimony. These buildings will be situated on tourist routes and will provide long-term jobs that will help lead to the sustainable development of these areas," says Florin Banateanu, UNDP coordinator of the Beautiful Romania project.

The project managers estimate that the project will provide about 1,000 jobs over the next two years. Disadvantaged young people, including the unemployed or post-institutionalized youngsters, will be paid a little above the $75 minimum monthly wage. Hundreds will be trained as construction workers. The UNDP-coordinated project will cost $4 million, with the Ministry of Culture contributing $400,000 and the 10 municipalities $650,000.

"We tried to select those cities that face both historical patrimony and social problems," says Mr. Banateanu, who adds that Romania, unfortunately, has plenty of both.

According to Romanian Culture Minister Razvan Theodorescu, the selection process favoured sites where the Ministry of Culture already had ongoing restoration programmes. These projects, he says, along with UNDP's, will deliver a consistent restored area in each chosen city. "In a matter of months, people and local authorities will again have old cities that they can be proud of. A monument must live," says Mr. Theodorescu, and "the younger generation has to learn about the past and learn from it."



A restored façade at 15 Halelor Street in Bucharest.

Renovation projects are first slated for Braila, a town on the Danube in southeastern Romania, where its unique Orthodox Church of the Old Rith will be refurbished, as well as Brasov, where two buildings of Brasov's Central Plaza and the Old Gate, a medieval masterpiece, will be restored.

"It's a blessing for our city," says Alba-Iulia Mayor Mircea Hava. "By using international expertise, we will attract tourists, we will be able to pass on the traditional art in our workshops, and we will bring the life back into the old city—as it should have been—forever." ■

Mihai Constantin has written for the Associated Press and is now a news presenter and editor for Romanian Television, TVR.

Left: Newly restored pavement on Selari Street. A new programme, Beautiful Romania, aims to recreate the Old City sections of towns across Romania.

Romania

AT A GLANCE

Population: 22.4 million

Area: 237,500 sq km

Human Development Ranking: 72 of 173 countries

Adult literacy rate: 98.2%

Annual population growth rate: -0.3%

Life expectancy at birth: 70.5 years

GDP per capita: $5,830

Source: *Human Development Report 2003*

DOMESTIC NEEDS

Greater Equality for Women Sought in UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Assistance from abroad helps break down barriers

Women's literacy rates in the UAE are higher than men's, but that has not translated into more opportunities in the workplace.

Photo: UNDP/UAE

BY MAJED G. TAIFOUR

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

Fatima Hamad Al-Falassi's friends liked the skin care solutions and other cosmetics she made in her home, and sometimes, she would sell her products under an anonymous name. But now she confidently prepares, markets and sells her products—openly and successfully. She says she will need to hire employees soon.

"I learned how to do business, to gain customers and never lose them," says Mrs. Al-Falassi. "I am not ashamed anymore of doing business. I feel proud that I can generate income."

Mrs. Al-Falassi learned about business through a programme initiated by the government, the General Women's Union, UNDP and UNIFEM, that aims to expand the opportunities for women.

"We are supporting initiatives for national women entrepreneurs as part of a wider programme to help support the participation of women in the social and economic development of their country," says Nadir Hadji-Hammou, UNDP Resident Representative in the UAE. "Our programmes are intended to help women entrepreneurs to start small, get a sense of the market and then grow," he adds. The initiative is part of a national strategy for the advancement of women that was launched last December.

Not poor, but not equal

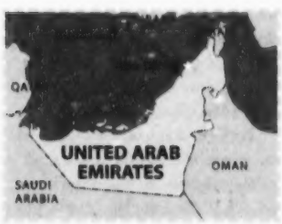
The UAE, on the northern edge of the Arabian peninsula, has enjoyed a prosperous economy. But for women, there are still limits to advancement.

"It is not that women are passed over for promotion," says a committee member of the Dubai Businesswomen's Association, "they are never considered. If that is not a glass ceiling, I don't know what it is."

Women have made gains in the medical and education sectors, but the gap between earnings by men and women is substantial.

The UAE-based media has been keen to highlight the promotion of women executives in recent months, publishing feel-good profiles of successful, female professionals. But while individual success stories do exist, they still remain the exception rather than the rule.

There are numerous factors for why things are the way they are, but the patriarchal tradition of Arab society is cited more than any other. According to a government report, "Family traditions just don't want women working in an environment when there is integration with Western businessmen. It is all to do with the fact that in the traditional Arab environment, women do not work in a mixed environment. In some respects, they have to fight past all the family traditions."



The remuneration packages offered to women often add to the difficulties. Many employers still assume that a woman will be supported by a father or husband, and as a result, make no distinction between the requirements of single executives or those with children. Yet while gender inequality may be a reality in the UAE, there are signs that the corner is being turned. Hard evidence is thin on the ground, but some say there is a growing sense within the workplace that attitudes are beginning to soften.

Women have made progress

UAE women have made gains in employment and now make up 41.5 percent of all employees in education, 34.2 percent in the health sector and 19.7 percent in social affairs, according to official figures. Women account for nearly 28 percent of civil servants in 24 federal ministry departments. And women have a major presence in the banking and financial services.

The country's strategy, according to Maytha Al-Shamsi, Deputy Vice Chancellor for Science and Research at the UAE University in Al Ain, is to promote women's role in politics and executive authority, economics, education, media, health, social work, legislature and environment.

In order to effectively implement the national strategy, Mrs. Al-Shamsi says there is a need to conduct increasingly targeted and direct interventions to influence policy-makers and legislators as well as the production of a skilled group of capable individuals with enough support to act as advocates for the strategy. Mrs. Al-Shamsi, who served as counselor for the General Women's Union between 1998 and 2001 says her position allowed her to open more channels of communication between the Women's Union and UNDP.

Jobs for women

The country's leadership has signalled that UAE should promote equal opportunities for women. According to UAE President Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, "Nothing could delight me more than to see women taking up their distinctive position in society. Nothing should hinder their progress. Like men, women deserve the right to occupy high positions, based on their capabilities and qualifications."

The joint UNDP, General Women's Union and UNIFEM programme seeks to promote the status of women with a focus on starting and improving small businesses. It also aims to put Emirates women in touch with the world.

According to Habiba Al-Marashi, Chairperson of the Emirates Environmental Group, "As a non-governmental organization promoting environmental awareness and sustainable development, our group strongly relies on the support and close partnership of concerned individuals and organizations, whether local, regional or international. Environmental work cannot be done by one entity on its own; it is a global issue, which needs global cooperation."

Businesswoman, Shamma Al-Mulla, says UAE women need to keep abreast with new business developments in the world. Mrs. Al-Mulla, who had previously worked with her husband on various projects, is now setting up her own business. Through the UNDP programme, she says, "not only have I acquainted myself with new avenues and opportunities for development, but I was also encouraged to set up my own business." ■

Majed G. Taifour is a journalist who has worked for Gulf News, *Dubai, as a Senior Business Reporter and is now Senior Media and Publications Officer for the Abu Dhabi Oil Refining Company.*

Fatima Hamad Al-Falassi's friends liked the cosmetics she handmade. Now she is in business for herself.

United Arab Emirates

AT A GLANCE

Population: 2.9 million

Area: 82,880 sq km

Human Development Ranking: 48 of 173 countries

Adult literacy rate: 76.7%

Annual population growth rate: 1.6%

Life expectancy at birth: 74.4 years

GDP per capita: $26,330

Source: *Human Development Report 2003*

Senegal's President
Abdoulaye Wade

Photo: Michelle Perret/UNDP

Shortly before leaving for the African Union Summit in Maputo, Mozambique, President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal sat down with CHOICES Editor-in-Chief, Djibril Diallo to talk about development and African initiatives that will help achieve the Millennium Development Goals that call for, among other things, the eradication of extreme poverty by 2015. President Wade was one of the four main visionaries of the process that resulted in NEPAD, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, an African-generated blueprint for development that has garnered considerable international support.

Senegal is on Track to Meet Millennium Development Goals

NEPAD has made an appeal to African leaders in order to undertake far-reaching reforms. What changes has Senegal made to promote the implementation of NEPAD?

NEPAD came into existence at a time when globalization had begun to have negative effects on the African economy due to the gap between growth rates, the deterioration in prices for African products and the debt burden. In 2000, the Organization for African Unity Heads of State sent a delegation to the G8 Summit in Japan to plead for debt cancellation, which did not happen. And because no one could see a way out for Africa's development, two initiatives were born—the Millennium African Plan and the Omega Plan. The Omega Plan stresses economic aspects and infrastructures to bring Africa up to the level of developed countries, and the Millennium African Plan appeals to the conscience of African leaders, explaining the historic reasons for African impoverishment. It is the fusion of these two initiatives that gave rise to NEPAD.

I have, therefore, launched large-scale infrastructure projects, such as the new international airport, the toll highway, the business city in West Africa, the wide gauge railway, the port of the future, the mineral-handling port of Bargny, the rehabilitation of the port of Saint Louis and the operation of the iron mines in Eastern Senegal.

At the same time, I created conditions for good governance in order to attract funds by implementing the following activities: restructuring the support system for the private sector; simplifying administrative procedures; drawing up legislation on investment policy; implementing development strategies for priority sectors, such as tourism and culture, public works and civil engineering, and assembly industries, and implementing a procedures centre for businesses.

Senegal wanted to turn words into action. And if we complete the infrastructure projects under way in two or three years, this will have an overall positive effect on economic growth, not only for Senegal, but also for the West African region, and possibly for all of Africa, because the large railways and highways extend from Senegal to the far end of the continent.

What role has the private sector played up until now in promoting the NEPAD objectives?

The best way to interest members of the private sector in NEPAD is to show what NEPAD can offer them. Just after Senegal gained independence, the socialist State did everything, ranging from production to distribution. It was not surprising that private services were poor or non-existent. A beginning was made in 1979 when the World Bank and structural adjustment imposed a scaling back of the public sector and the promotion of the private sector. There were

President Wade being interviewed by CHOICES Editor-in-Chief Djibril Diallo.

Photo: Shamsa Zamani/UNDP

President Wade ringing the opening bell at the New York Stock Exchange. President Wade has emphasized a major role for the private sector in Senegal's development.

many changes, many public businesses were closed or they were sold off practically at bargain prices, but this movement remained incomplete. It is one thing to reduce the hold of the public sector, but another to develop the private sector, to make it accountable and aware so that it becomes a responsible force for development. This is what we are doing by encouraging all of these private initiatives. We initiate projects and submit them to the private sector, pledging our support. All big projects are conceived in this manner and launched, and then we call upon the private sector to take over.

How has the global economy and global tensions affected Senegal and do you think that the conflicts in Africa, such as the situation in Côte d'Ivoire and the Zimbabwe issue, are an obstacle for NEPAD's development?

Up until now, the global economy, the tensions in the world, and the war in Iraq have not had any impact. Why? Because our traditional clients and our partners in this cooperation have not been affected; on the other hand, regional tensions have had a real impact.

The crisis which has affected production in Côte d'Ivoire has subsequently had an impact on economic growth in the West African Economic Monetary Union. But there have been no monetary consequences because the very orthodox monetary policy, which has been implemented until now, has resulted in our currency, with a reserve ratio of 115 percent, not being affected.

Does globalization actually help or hurt Africa? And how should the war on poverty be fought?

In Africa, we are advocates of globalization as a general movement in the development of the world economy because growth in the world economy is the source of the resources that must develop Africa, either through aid or through international trade. And although globalization implies competitiveness, we are not afraid of it. We are capable of providing the expertise, either because we have workers who are very skilled or because we can educate and train them, and have the possibility of paying them lower salaries for the same expertise. We do not fear international competition. The Senegalese worker will not be paid like the American worker or a Renault employee; so we win from this competitiveness. We are capable of producing quality, but only on the condition that trade is "fair" and this raises the problem of subsidies.

As for the war on poverty, there is the question as to whether poverty has arisen now or whether it has always existed. If it has always existed, then the worldwide diagnosis, which was made of Africa following the independence of the various countries, was wrong. The war on poverty should have been declared then. But it is not possible to implement 40 years of economic and financial policy and wake up one fine morning and now say that there is poverty and it must be combated. Whatever the case may be, it is a real problem for us in Senegal and the best way to fight poverty is to give people lucrative activities, but not to give them food. As proof, last year, because of the difficulties caused by the drought, the government distributed food supplies worth 13 billion CFA Francs. This year, according to our projections, we will not distribute more than three and a half billion CFA Francs and for the balance, we prefer to give the farmers seeds and fertilizer so that they can grow crops. This change over a period of only two years shows that we have opted for doing what it takes to get people to work. I prefer to give them aid in the form of seeds and fertilizer rather than to give them food.

Is Senegal on the right track for implementing the Millennium Development Goals?

Senegal's future depends on its youth and on building an infrastructure that measures up to first world standards.

Senegal is certainly on the right track for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The best way is to ensure the foundations for growth and currently, the Senegalese economy is working well. To this end, we have created a Presidential Investment Council, which brings together not only Senegalese investors and foreign investors residing in Senegal, but also foreign investors who have nothing to do with Senegal, but who simply, out of sympathy, accept to provide us their expertise. With regards to corruption, I have just signed the anti-corruption bill, which creates a national commission to fight corruption and extortion. This commission includes, among others, members from the private sector and non-governmental organizations.

We have simulated a very sharp reduction in corporate income tax. In Africa, corporate income tax is approximately 45 to 50 percent. In Senegal it was 35 percent, but is now 31 percent. We have performed simulations to find out if it is possible to reduce this tax to 25 percent to see the impact on public finance, with the World Bank undertaking to compensate for potential loss in revenues. ■

Millennium Development Goals: Promoting the Possible

BY RAJESWARY IRUTHAYANATHAN

UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK

Your neighbours may not yet know about the Millennium Development Goals, but there's a good chance they will. Soon. The Goals could change the world.

The Millennium Development Goals are intended to address some of the world's most pressing problems—114 million children of primary age are not enrolled in school; over 1.2 billion people live on less than one dollar a day, 800 million are hungry and 448 million children under five are underweight in the world. And 800 million children under 15 years contracted the AIDS virus in 2002.

Three years ago world leaders pledged to halve extreme poverty, promote gender equality, reduce maternal mortality, roll back HIV/AIDS and stop environmental degradation. The Goals have become the yardstick for progress among many governments and international organizations to measure progress, shift budget priorities and institute reforms to improve human development around the world.

But the Goals are still not well known among the public at large.

While they may never become a household name, the United Nations is mobilizing its resources and partners in an unprecedented manner in support of the Goals.

"The MDGs are a very simple but powerful idea whose time has come," said UNDP Administrator Mark Malloch Brown. "They are in effect the UN's effort to set the terms of a globalization driven not by the interests of the strong, but managed in the interests of the poor."

To broaden recognition of the Goals, UNDP initiated a series of communications activities, the latest being the launch of the Human Development Report, entitled *Millennium Development Goals: A compact among nations to end human poverty*. The Report argues that the Goals are attainable, provided countries of the North and South work together.

And in October, UNDP, as part of its annual commemoration of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, is activating its global network of offices, as well as UN agencies, civil society organizations, the private sector, artists, sports figures, the media and citizens, to channel their energies to propel the Goals into the public consciousness. Between 17-24 October this year, every UNDP country office will recognize local heroes who, through their own efforts, have energized others to raise awareness about the Goals in their communities, municipalities, districts and cities.

At a special ceremony at the UN headquarters, UNDP will honour five individuals representing every region of the world, who have made a difference in raising awareness about the Goals. These honourees will receive the Poverty Eradication Award. On this occasion, UNDP will also launch *Africa 2015*, an Africa-wide movement to boost the efforts of those already working to achieve the Goals and to encourage others to join them.

The idea behind *Africa 2015*, which will be replicated in other regions, is to find a specific Goal that can captivate public interest. In Africa, where three-quarters of the world's 42 million suffering from HIV/AIDS live, the campaign will focus on combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

UNDP recently appointed Baaba Maal, the renowned Senegalese singer, as UNDP Youth Emissary to remind young people in Africa about the threat of HIV/AIDS. Starting with a concert in July in Dakar, Baaba Maal is backing UNDP's efforts to make sure the Goals become better known.

"Redressing the effects of HIV/AIDS will lead towards reaching the Millennium Development Goals," said Kenneth Kaunda, Zambia's first President at a UNDP-sponsored workshop in South Africa recently. Mr Kaunda, who lost a son to AIDS, and who volunteered to take an HIV/AIDS test, added, "We cannot talk about the Goals without factoring in the significance of HIV/AIDS." ■

Rajeswary Iruthayanathan is the Managing Editor of CHOICES.

Through his songs, Baaba Maal (at left) will warn youths of the danger of HIV/AIDS.

Photo: Hoppe Malo/UNDP

THE GOALS

By 2015, all United Nations Member States have pledged to:

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Achieve universal primary education
- Promote gender equality and empower women
- Reduce child mortality
- Improve maternal health
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Ensure environmental sustainability
- Develop a global partnership for development

Survey: Prevalence of Guns Hampers Development

UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK

At least 1,134 companies in 98 countries are producing the small arms that inevitably end up fueling conflict in trouble spots around the world, according to the *Small Arms Survey 2003: Development Denied*, an annually updated look at small arms production, stockpiles, legal and illicit transfers, and national, regional and global measures to deal with the problems associated with small arms proliferation.

Small in size, these firearms are weapons of massive destruction, responsible for the deaths of some 300,000 people in countries involved in conflict and 200,000 in "peaceful" societies. But according to the *Survey*, the deaths and injuries caused by small arms are not the only casualties as the widespread availability of the weapons has emerged as a major obstacle to development efforts.

There are over 639 million firearms in the world today, 59 percent legally held by civilians. About seven million small arms are produced every year and civilians account for almost 80 percent of the market. The European Union and the United States are the world's leading small arms exporters.

Readily available, cheap, portable and easy to use, small arms have been the primary tools of violence in virtually every contemporary conflict. The weapons, according to the *Survey*, are linked to increases in crime and concurrently, with increased security spending which drains valuable resources for development to a largely unproductive economic activity. At the same time, the *Survey* found that the presence of small arms tended to reduce the availability of social services.

UNDP Administrator Mark Malloch Brown, in the book's preface, wrote that the *Survey* "makes an invaluable contribution to global efforts to develop and implement effective projects to limit the use and spread of small arms. It provides an important global point of reference for UNDP and other international agencies seeking to confront this critical challenge to human security."

The *Small Arms Survey*, produced by an independent research project based at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, was launched at the two-year review of the outcome of the 2001 UN Small Arms Conference, which squarely put the issue of the illicit spread of small arms and light weapons on the international agenda.

As a result of the Conference, UNDP has beefed up support for governments and civil society toward the formulation and implementation of weapons collection and demobilization programmes. UNDP, in a study, examined small arms situation in Kosovo after more than a decade of ethnically-based persecution and found that there are an estimated 330,000-460,000 civilian small arms in Kosovo, and many of these arms are owned by youths who seek protection and security from robberies and other forms of criminality.

In Albania, where more than half a million small arms were looted from army stockpiles in 1997, UNDP has played a critical role in promoting security sector reform as part of its preventive, peace building, post-conflict and sustainable development operations. By promoting public awareness campaigns and community participation in small arms control and reconstruction, UNDP has played a leading role in developing the country's capacities to manage weapons collection, demobilization and violence reduction initiatives.

The Small Arms Survey was produced through partnerships with UNDP, the UN Department of Disarmament Affairs, NGOs and local groups. The project receives funding from the Governments of Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. ■

—By Tala Dowlatshahi, Communications Specialist in UNDP's Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery in New York.

Development is being held hostage at gunpoint, according to new Small Arms Survey.

GLOBAL ACTORS NEED A GLOBAL STAGE
Advertise in CHOICES

Unstable and insecure times like this demand action. Building democracy, reducing poverty, establishing prosperity. For global actors who are part of the solution, there is one stage where attention is guaranteed—CHOICES.

CHOICES is the magazine that development experts and decision makers read. Everywhere. From Mexico to Madagascar. To reach the experts throughout the world, you need to advertise in CHOICES.

No other magazine details the successes of human development like CHOICES. And no other magazine is seen by as varied an audience as CHOICES, from the rich and powerful to the weak and voiceless.

For more information, call 212-906 5325 or e-mail choices@undp.org.

CHOICES

THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT MAGAZINE

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan meeting with the new African Union Chairman, Mozambique President Joaquim Chissano.

Need for Prosperity and Peace at Top of of African Union Agenda

MAPUTO, MOZAMBIQUE

Africa's devastating armed conflicts dominated discussions at the Second Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union in this country which, little more than a decade ago, began to pull itself out of a 20-year civil war.

The annual gathering brought together over 30 African presidents and prime ministers in Maputo—Mozambique's picturesque capital on the shores of the Indian Ocean. It marked the end of a year-long transition from the Organization of African Unity to the African Union, officially launched in Durban, South Africa in July 2002. The Summit resulted in renewed support to the New Partnership for Africa's Development—or NEPAD—a blueprint to promote development in Africa, and laid the groundwork for the creation of key AU structures, including a Peace and Security Council.

In his opening remarks, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan highlighted the urgent need for the Council, saying the conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Liberia "make it painfully obvious that Africa has nowhere near the effective mechanisms it needs to prevent the outbreak of conflict or enforce basic international humanitarian law," and pledged UN support for the region's efforts.

UNDP Administrator Mark Malloch Brown told the African Union that Africa could cut extreme poverty in half by 2015 if Africa and the world make the necessary commitments of political will and resources.

Thabo Mbeki, South African President and outgoing AU Chair, urged his fellow leaders to move forward to establish the Council.

"Since the Union came into being, it has been seized with efforts to resolve a number of conflicts and cases of instability across the continent," he said. Modeled loosely after the UN Security Council, the AU Peace and Security Council will have the power to intervene in countries facing extreme circumstances, including crimes against humanity, and could be established by the end of 2003.

Through its Regional Bureau for Africa, UNDP is boosting the AU's work with a US$2 million contribution to support peace and security in the region. The contribution is part of a $6.4 million project for which Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden have pledged assistance. UNDP had previously contributed $1.3 million to facilitate the transition from the Organization of African Unity. The peace and security project will train Africans to research, analyze and develop policies to improve the AU's ability to monitor on-going and potential conflicts and formulate effective responses.

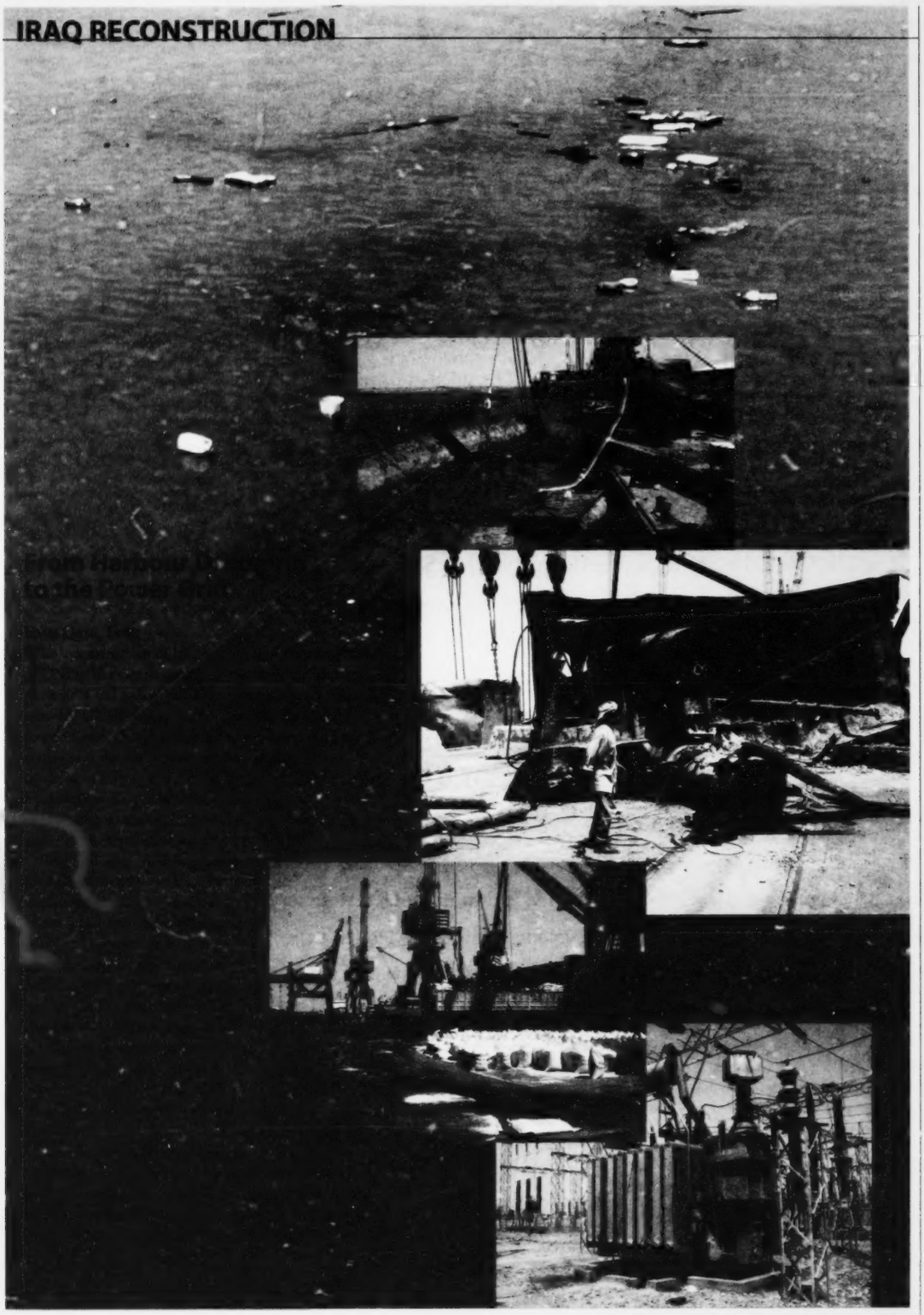
This initiative is considered central to UNDP's work to help Africa achieve the Millennium Development Goals, the focus of the *Human Development Report 2003*.

In a historic presentation on the Report to the 1,000 Heads of State and Government, delegates and other guests assembled at the opening ceremony, UNDP Administrator Mark Malloch Brown said, "We have the global means, the know-how and the record of development success here in Africa as well as other regions, to state categorically that if today Africa and the world make the commitment of will and resources, then tomorrow, 2015, we can reach the Millennium Development Goals of halving poverty, removing hunger, putting every boy and girl in school and stemming the crisis in our health and environment."

Joaquim Chissano, Mozambique's President and incoming AU Chair, presented a motion, later adopted by the Assembly, which welcomed the launch of the *Human Development Report 2003* and took note of the challenges highlighted, particularly those related to achieving the the Millennium Development Goals. It also appealed for increased funding for UNDP.

"The proposed Millennium Pact corresponds to the strategic vision held by the African Union for the development of our continent," President Chissano said. "Africa is ready to fulfill its part of the agreement." He added, "We appeal to our developed partners to fulfill their parts. Only in this way will real human development become a reality for Africa." ■

—By Cassandra Waldon, Communications Specialist in UNDP New York.



MATTERS OF FACT

Reaching the **Millennium Development Goals** depends on many factors, including political will and money. It is estimated that at least **US$100 billion** in assistance a year, at a minimum, will be needed until 2015. That is double the present amount of $50 billion a year. During the 1990s, **official development assistance** dropped from 0.33 percent to 0.22 percent of donor countries' gross national income. The target is **0.7 percent**. Of the 49 **least developed countries**, 31 receive less aid today than they did in 1990. So far, **debt relief** has benefited 26 countries, reducing debt servicing from $3.7 billion in 1998 to $2.2 billion in 2001. The tariffs that developed countries levy on manufactured goods from developing countries are four times higher than those from other developed countries. **Farmers** in rich countries receive $311 billion a year in **subsidies**. The annual dairy subsidy in the European Union amounts to $913 per **cow** per year; the EU's aid to Africa is $8 per African. The US pays farmers $10.7 million per day for **cotton;** its **assistance** to sub-Saharan Africa is $3.1 million per day. Since last year's **International Conference on Financing for Development**, developed countries pledged to **increase aid** by $16 billion by 2006. Official ODA would then reach only 0.26 percent of GNP.

Source: *UNDP Human Development Report 2003*

United Nations Development Programme
One United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017
www.undp.org

UNDP

VISIT Your United Nations 50 Years of Guided Tours

SEP 2203 NY

UNITED NATIONS PB METER 6999950 UN POSTAGE $1.06